

# England's Interest: (9) 13

Or, Means to promote the Consumption of *English Wooll*, to Populate the Nation, and raise the Value of Lands, and the Product of them, by increasing the Manufacturers of Cloth and Stuffs made of *English Wooll*, and Silk, and Mohair-Yarn in this Kingdom. Published to prevent Misunderstandings, and that right Judgment may be given in a matter of so great concern to the Nation. Contained in Reasons intended to be offered to a Committee of the Honourable House of Commons, who appointed to hear the Weavers, against a Bill prohibiting the wear of Silks and Stuffs for six Months of the Year. (July the 9th, 1689.)

By WILLIAM JAMES.

Licensed and Entered according to Order.

**I** Shall first shew, that this Bill will not answer the Design of it, which is a greater Consumption of Wooll, but greatly lessen it. *Secondly*, I shall take notice of the undeniable Evil Effects, and consequences of it. And *Thirdly*, Humbly offer to consideration, what are the Obstructions to the Consumption of Wooll, and a proper means to promote it.

*That this will not answer the Design of the Bill, appears thus.*

It is acknowledged by all intelligent Persons, that the greatest Consumption of our *English Wooll*, is to *Turky*; our Merchants transporting thither 25 or 30000 Cloaths yearly, which are Manufactured here, and made of our *English Wooll*, the making of which Cloaths, employs many Thousand People, and is more than this Nation and the whole World besides consumes; for there is little Transported to other parts of the World, and not one tenth part worn of it in *England*; that little which is worn in *England*, is most home-made Cloth put out by poor labouring Men in the Country, for their own use and wear; and the generality of the Cloaths worn here by the *Nobility* and *Gentry*, and *Trademen* of the best Rank and Quality, have little, if any, *English Wooll* in them; and those worn by ordinary *Tradesmen*, not above one third.

Now, the chief Return for those Cloaths, are Silk, and Mohair-Yarn; *Turky* not affording any other Commodities fit for *England*, to the value of one eighth part of our Cloath transported thither; therefore by this Restraint of wearing Silks, this Trade to *Turky* must needs be Reduced, and in time be brought to little or nothing. For if the Consumption of Silk and Hair be lessened in *England*, the Consumption of English Cloath will be proportionably lessened in *Turky*, and consequently, lessen the Consumption of our *English Wooll*. For it cannot be thought, that those Persons, who now wear Silk and Hair Stuffs (when prohibited to be worn) will wear coarse Cloaths, made of our *English Wooll*; and as for others, they wear them already. So that there will be no Addition to the Consumption of Wooll here in *England* by virtue of this *Act*.

Besides, the prohibiting the wear of Silk and Hair Stuffs in the Winter Season, doth in a measure, and will in time utterly exclude the Manufacturing of Silks and Stuffs in *England*, (which employs Scores, if not Hundreds of Thousands); for that most of the *English* Silks being thick and substantial, are fittest for the Winter season, and not only their Silks, but Stuffs, as *Singers*, *Prints*, *Baratines*, *Tunians*, *Mohars*, *Farindines*, and others, which consume the greatest part of our *Turky* Silk, and Mohair-Yarn, are worn chiefly by Women in that time, and part of the Year; whereas the thinner and lighter Silks, that are worn in the Summer, are brought in fully Manufactured from the *East-India*, and other parts, there being not one fifth part of the Silks then worn of our own Manufacture.

Again, this *Act* prohibits the wear of Stuffs mixt with Silk: now, there are several sorts of Stuffs— as *Bonazzines*, *Amberines*, *Seyers*, *Lamines*, *Estimines*, *Druggas*, *Draffs*, and many other *Normick-Stuffs*, which are made of *English Wooll*, and not above one tenth part of Silk in them; and because of this little Silk in them, cannot be worn, which will hinder the Consumption of Wooll ten times more than all the Cloath worn by virtue of this *Act*, will promote it. So that it is manifest, this *Act* instead of promoting the Consumption of Wooll, will greatly lessen it, and in little time bring that Staple-Commodity and Trade to Ruin.

I shall only add to the foregoing Reasons, the Consideration of the *French* Nation, who by reason of the Transportation of our Wooll (by evil-minded and interested Men, Enemies to the Nation, and Contemners of the Laws) are become Competitors with us in this Trade to *Turky*, and do grow, and greatly increase in it; so that they now sell as great Quantities as we, and are driving daily to cover us in that profitable Trade. And this *Act* will certainly give them the greatest Advantage imaginable, to perfect this their Design, and in time to root us quite out of the Honourable and profitable trades of this Nation. So that from this Argument also, it appears as clear as the sun in the firmament, That this *Act* will lessen the Vent of our Cloath made of *English Wooll*, to *Turky*.

*Turky.* Therefore we do hope, for this, and the foregoing Reasons, the Parliament will lay aside this Act, or find some other way for the Vending and Consumption of our Wooll, (and such as may keep at Work, and Employ so many thousand People, as the Woollen and Silk Manufactures do,) either here in *England*, or some other Parts of the World, before they pass this Act, which will put so great a stop to the Consumption of it in *Turky*.

*The evil Consequences of this Act follow.*

By this Act, the chiefest and most beneficial Manufactures of *England*, will be discouraged and ruined; for they employ more People than all the Trades in *England* besides. As to the Silk-Trade, it Employs both Old and Young, Blind and Lame, who are able to get something of a Livelihood by it; who otherwise must necessarily beg their Bread, and be chargeable to the Places of their Abodes; and upon the most modest Computation, there are Employed and Maintained by this Trade in and about the Cities of *London* and *Westminster*, above One hundred thousand Persons, besides great Numbers at *Canterbury*, *Norwich*, and other Places. If this Act pass into a Law, these must and will immediately be turned out of Employment, and be forced either to Beg, steal, or Starve, or do worse; and as for the Cloathing-Trade, they will soon feel the effects of it; for they are defendant one upon another, as may be gathered from the preceding Reasons; which demonstrate that the more of our own Manufactured Silks are worn in *England*, the more Cloath made of *English* Wooll is vendied; and this Act, lessening the Consumption of Silk, must consequently lessen the Consumption of their Cloath, and take off the Employment of many thousands of that Trade. So that this Act will not only deprive these great Numbers of People of their present and future Subsistence, and render them miserable, who are now useful and beneficial to the Nation; but also hinder other Foreign Protestants from coming here to reside; a great number whereof have been, and now are, and many thousands more may be, employed in this Silk and Hair Trade, were it duly encouraged.

As to that Supposition, That the Silk and Hair Trade will be sufficiently provided for, by the six Months time, wherein they are allowed to be worn; it will prove a great mistake. For besides what hath been already said, That the chiefest Consumption of our Silk and Hair Stuffs, is in the Winter-season; this also may be added, That this supposed six Months, will not employ the Silk Trade above three Months. For very few Persons, if any, except the Nobility, do make Garments more than once in a quarter of a year: So that from *July* the 15<sup>th</sup>, to *April* the 15<sup>th</sup>, which is nine Months in the Year, the Mercers and Weavers must lie still, and be idle. And as to the Hair Trade, which is considerable, and employs many Thousands, that will be wholly lost; the Commodities generally made of them, being worn only in the Winter-season, except some few Persons, who are employed in making of Camlets, which at this time doth not consume one tenth Part of the Mohair-yarn that comes over for the Exchange of our Cloath. So that if Foreign Silks were prohibited, the Trade of Silk-weaving could not in that short time make so many Silks as will answer the present Consumption of Cloath to *Turky*: So that the Cloathing-Trade must necessarily decline, and the Manufacturers thereof, be exposed to misery for want of Employment, and the Consumption of *English* Wooll greatly diminished.

And the evil Influences of this Act will not stop here; but its ill Effects will extend to the Nobility and Gentry themselves, to their inconceivable, if not irrecoverable loss. For the God hath blessed them with considerable Estates in Land; yet, if their Lands be unoccupied, they will be little the better for them; and that their Lands will lye unoccupied, at least, the greatest part of them, if this Act pass into a Law, is most certain, because of that great Poverty and Depopulation that so necessarily and demonstratively will ensue upon it. It is manifest by Experience, that where a Manufacture, and much People are settled in any part of the Nation, there the Lands are not only occupied, but yield the greatest Rents, and the Fruits thereof the greatest Price. This Act will not only hinder the increase of People in those Parts of the Nation that want them, but deprive those parts of the Nation that have them, of their present and future Benefit by them; and in time may produce a general decay of Manufactures in the Nation. I would suppose, that by virtue of this Act, the price of Wooll should be advanced to 12 p. a Pound, which is impossible; for the contrary, even the lessening of the Price, will be the effects of it. But for Argument-sake suppose it; then I will ask, Whether the advance of Wooll to 12 d. a Pound, will answer to the fall of their Corn 2 s. in a Bushel, and their Beef, Mutton, Butter, and Cheese, 1 d. or 2 d. a Pound? And whether they had not better sell their Wooll for a penny a Pound, nay, give it away, rather than have their other Fruits of their Land to fall so considerably by it? The solution of this Question is nigh at hand, to the meanest Capacity. Now, that the fall and lessening of the Price of these, will be the effects of this Act, is manifest; for when the People that should eat them, some are so Poor they cannot buy them, and others Transport themselves to other parts for a Livelihood; what will they do with them, except it be supposed they will turn Merchants, and Transport them after them; which if they do, I am sure, Loss must be the greatest Debtor to Ballance the Account; which is a bad Pay-master.

Again, if the Silk-Trade, now under so great discouragement by Foreign Importation, &c. be capable of employing so many thousand People, when it is rightly supposed that not one fourth part of the Silks consumed in *England*, are Manufactured here, but in Foreign Parts; Will it not be an unspeakable Prejudice to this Nation, if a stop be put to the growth of so beneficial

cial a Trade, that if encouraged, may and will Employ three or four hundred thousand People more; by which (Protestant Trade, for so it may rightly be called) the Protestant Interest is, and may be encouraged and strengthened, by employing those Persons of that Profession, which are and may come over, to the Enriching the Nation, and raising the Price of Lands, and the Product of them. Yet this Act will not only stop the growth, but utterly destroy this so useful and beneficial a Manufacture; and is this a small matter? nay, is it not a matter of the greatest concern to the Nation? I do not question, but upon consideration of these things, the Parliament will lay aside this Act, or at leastwise, before they Pass it, find out some other Employment for those vast multitudes of our Natives and Foreigners already here, and that shall hereafter upon the Account of Religion, come hither; This is but reasonable, and yet I am sure impossible.

Therefore certainly this Act, of all others that ever men were mistaken in, is most prejudicial to the whole Kingdom; for if that be a true maxim (as doubtless it is,) That the safety of the King, Queen, and Kingdom, stands in the Multitude and Riches of the people; then this Act, which so inevitably tends to the depopulating and impoverishing the Nation, must render it indefensible and miserable; and it is so much the more aggravating, in that it will ruin and destroy that Trade, which is the most hopeful and ready means to render this Nation the most Flourishing, Rich, and Powerful Kingdom, and the Fortres of the Protestant Interest, and a sure Refuge, under God, to all its Professors. I am bold to say, That if all the Enemies in Christendom should consult together, they could not have devised a more proper and effectual means to overthrow the foundation of the Peace and Glory of this Nation, and the Protestant Religion and Interest, than by this or such like Acts, which will not only hinder the Increase of the People and Trade of this Nation, and consequently the Strength and Riches of it; but also tends to the ruin of Trade, depopulating and impoverishing of it, and thereby renders it indefensible, and unable to oppose their wicked designs against it.

Far be it from me to think, that any Member of the Honourable House of Commons, should be influenced by any such Counsels or Persons; or that they would willingly do the least prejudice, much less a thing so greatly prejudicial to the Interest of the Nation, and the Protestant Religion. Yet the effects of this Act, if it pass, will be such; and this, that Politick Prince the French King, well knows, who hath made himself and Nation powerful, by encouraging this Silk Trade, which employs so many Thousands of his People, by Weaving them at home, and Transporting them abroad, both to Us and many other parts of the World. And it is manifest, he hath endeavoured all along to suppress the growth of this Manufacture here, by holding Treaties of Trade, with Promises to come to an Equality; but hath so managed it, by such subtle means, and powerful instruments, that instead of abating the disproportion of Trade, even in the time of Treaty, it hath increased to a prodigious Excess, even to above a Million in one year, as can be made appear by the Custom-House Books; beside Prohibited Goods not Entred, which amounts to some Hundreds of Thousands more. The very Silks and Linnen Cloth imported from France in one Year, amounts to above Six hundred thousand pounds more than all the Growth and Manufactures of England exported thither; which prodigious Sum must be paid in Money, to the exhausting our Coin. So that it is no wonder that he is grown so powerful, and gives Laws, as it were, and bids defiance to the whole World; and that he endeavours by all means to suppress the growth of this Trade here, when he gains even from hence so many Hundred thousand Pounds a year by it, to the enriching him and his people, and impoverishing us. And there can nothing doubtless be more conducing to his Designs (and will be matter of rejoicing to him and his Jesuitical Crew) than a Restraint of Weaving our own Silks, by a Law; for that it will put an opportunity into his hand to obtain the whole Trade to Turkey, which is the most profitable to this Nation; for that it encourages Navigation, and takes off so great a quantity of our Cloth, which employs so many Thousands of our People; and by this means, this Nation, which is at present so great a check to his ambitious Designs, will soon come under his Power, so as to give us what Laws he pleases; which God in Mercy prevent.

*The Obstructions to the Consumption of Wooll, and Means to Promote it, follow.*

The great Obstruction to the Consumption of Wooll, hath been our wearing great quantities of Silks and other Commodities from Foreign parts; especially from France and India; as Silks called *Perfians*; and *Calicoes* imported by the *East-India Company*: Beside the Silks, the *Calicoes* last mentioned, contribute more to the lessening the Consumption of Wool, than most people are aware of, and is little regarded. A considerable part and number of this Nation, consists of Children from 1 or 2, to 12 or 13 years old; and the generality of these do wear Frocks, and some Petticoats of stained and striped *Calicoes*; and of late, many others do wear them for Petticoats, which hath greatly hindred the Consumption of many pretty Stuffs, some made all of Wooll, and some with a little Silk mixt with Wooll, which were formerly used in such Vestments; and which if again used, would consume more English Wooll, than can well be imagined; I am sure to ten times the Quantity that would be worn the more in Cloth, if this Act should pass.

By that which hath been already said, the means of Promoting the Consumption of Wool, is near at hand, and visible to all, if there be an Act pass so strict, that if possible, it may wholly prevent

rent the Importation of such Silks, which the Parliament in their Great Wisdoms shall think meet to prohibit ; and to countenance and encourage the use and wear of our own Manufactured Silks and Stuffs, which are the product of our own Woollen Manufactures; this would greatly increase the Consumption of Wooll : And the former Reasons and Arguments do sufficiently demonstirate to any impartial considering man, That the more Silk and Hair Stuffs manufactured here in *England*, are worn and consumed, the greater will be the Consumption of our *English* Wooll : And besides these undeniable Reasons, we appeal to the Clothiers themselves, who manufacture those Cloaths made of *English* Wooll, who doubtless are the most competent Judges in this case ; and who are ready to assert the truth thereof, when called to it ; and it is an undoubted truth, That he that wears a Silk or Mohair Garment of our own manufacturing, doth consume more *English* Wooll, than numbers of persons that wear Cloth ; therefore if the Consumption of Wooll be a common Good to this Nation, as doubtless it is, they are the best Comonwealths-men, that wear Silks and Stuffs of our own Manufacturing.

Let it not be thought, that I hyperbolize, or over-speak and magnifie the usefulness and beneficialnes of this Silk Manufacture in *England*, out of Interest, or any other but good design ; for what hath been said of it, hath not only been demonstrated by undeniable and convincing Arguments, but is made good by Experience ; for since that good Act, Prohibiting *French* Silks for three years, there hath been a far greater quantity of Silks made in *England*, than ever was before that time ; and the Price of Wooll since that time, hath been much advanced ; and now since there hath been an interruption of Trade to *Turkey*, by reason of the War and Distractions there, the Price of Wooll is greatly lessened ; which is a clear démonstration, That it is the want of Exportation thither, that is the cause of it, and not the wearing of our own Silks here. And as for for Fine Cloth, the consumption of which sort only, will be promoted by this Act, it hath been more generally worn in some years last past, by the Nobility, Gentry, and Tradesmen of best Quality, than in former years, and yet the Consumption of our *English* Wooll hath been little or nothing promoted by it ; indeed it hath much promoted the Consumption of *Spanishe* Wooll, which we do not grudg, but let it have its course, forasmuch as it employs many people ; but we hope the Parliament will not promote it by such a Law, that is to the prejudice of a Trade ten times more valuable and useful, in all respects, as the weaving of Silks and Stuffs of our own manufacturing, hath been so plainly demonstrated to be.

An effectual Prohibition of all Foreign Silks that shall be thought prejudicial, and hinder the Consumption of our own Manufactured Silks and Stuffs, without any injunction to wear Cloth or Stuffs made of all Wooll, will be a sufficient Encouragement to, and greatly advance the Price of Wooll in a little season, and also populate the Nation ; to the increase of the price of Lands, and the Fruits and Product of it : And if to this, the Parliament shall see cause to prohibit the wearing of Painted Callicoes in Frocks, Petticoats, and other outward Garments, and lay no restraint upon any one, but give equal Countenance and Encouragement to all the Manufactures of Silks, Stuffs, and Cloth, this would not only advance the Price of Wooll, by reason of the great use of it, but in few years it will set some Hundred thousands of Persons at work, more than now is ; it would also prevent the Exportation of our Wooll, and the Designs of those who are now Competitors with us in that profitable Trade to *Turkey* ; for there will be so much use of it by our Clothiers, and Stuff Weavers, that no person will have so much as a temptation to transport it, for want of a Price for it ; and so that staple Commodity will be kept within our own Nation, to the great increase of it in Riches, Strength, and Power.

Forasmuch therefore, as this Trade is so useful and beneficial to the King, Queen and whole Kingdom, to the Protestant Interest, and every particular person in the Nation, we hope the Parliament will make a Fence about it, and secure it from all violation, that it may be as sacred as *Magna Charta* it self, and a brand of Infamy put upon those that shall endeavour to make the least breach upon it, and thereby prevent the Designs of all the Enemies to our Religion and Nation. Therefore we Pray, That they would not only lay aside this Act, which discourageth ; but pass such an Act, as in their Wisdoms they shall think most meet, to encourage this most useful and beneficial Trade of the Nation, which for many years last past, hath been discouraged by Foreign Importations, unusual long Mournings, and other subtleties of the Enemies of this Nation, to the Ruin of many of the Manufacturers thereof. And this is no other than what we Hope for, do Expect, and yet have confidence we shall Obtain from our Protestant King, Queen and Parliament : *Whom God long Preserve*.

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**W**HO also hath been well known for many years, to Trim all manner of Silks, as well Colours, as Blacks and Venetians, after the best manner ; and to Take off the Tarnish, as well as to Trim and Beautifie all manner of Gold and Silver Stuffs, and Stuffs mixt with Wooll, Hair, and Silk, as Cossarts, Barratines, Antharines, &c. who will take care to do them as Well and as Cheap ( according to the nature of the Works ) for those Mercers, Weavers, or Others, that shall Employ him therein, as any Person whatsoever.

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